

In Jamestown

John Smith



OVERVIEW

Captain John Smith, explorer, cartographer, and writer, was one of the leaders of the first permanent English settlement in North America, at Jamestown, Virginia. The small band of about 100 colonists who landed at a site on the James River in May 1607, built a fort and, with the help of Native Americans, managed to survive in the wilderness. A year later Smith wrote back to England a "True Relation" of their struggles.

GUIDED READING As you read, consider the following:

- Think about the different approaches each captain employs to take care of the colonists. Which approach worked best?
 - How did the Native Americans help the colonists survive?
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Captaine Newport having set things in order, set saile for England the 22d of June, leaving provision for 13. or 14 weeks. The day before the Ships departure, the King of Pamaunke sent the Indian that had met us before in our discoverie, to assure us peace; our fort being then palisadoed round, and all our men in good health and comfort, albeit, that through some discontented humors, it did not so long continue, for the President and Captaine Gosnold, with the rest of the Counsell, being for the moste part discontented with one another, in so much, that things were neither carried with that discretion nor any busines effected in such good sort as wisdome would, nor our owne good and safetie required, whereby, and through the hard dealing of our President, the rest of the counsell beeing diverslie affected through his audacious commaund; and for Captaine Martin, albeit verie honest, and wishing the best good, yet so sicke and weake; and my selfe so disgrac'd through others mallice: through which disorder God (being angrie with us) plagued us with such famin and sicknes, that the living were scarce able to bury the dead: our want of sufficient and good victualls, with continuall watching, foure or five each night at three Bulwarkes, being the chiefe cause: onely of Sturgion wee had great store, whereon our men would so greedily surfet, as it cost manye their lives: the Sack, Aquavitie, and other preservatives for our health, being kept onely in the Presidents hands, for his owne diet, and his few associates. Shortly after Captaine Gosnold fell sicke, and within three weekes died, Captaine Ratcliffe being then also verie sicke and weake, and my selfe having also tasted of the extremitie therof, but by Gods assistance being well recovered, Kendall about this time, for divers reasons deposed from being of the Councell: and shortly after it pleased God

(in our extremity) to move the Indians to bring us Corne, ere it was halfe ripe, to refresh us, when we rather expected when they would destroy us: about the tenth of September there was about 46 of our men dead, at which time Captaine Wingefield having ordred the affaires in such sort that he was generally hated of all, in which respect with one consent he was deposed from his presidencie, and Captaine Ratcliffe according to his course was elected.

Our provision being now within twentie dayes spent, the Indians brought us great store both of Corne and bread ready made: and also there came such aboundance of Fowles into the Rivers, as greatly refreshed our weake estates, whereuppon many of our weake men were presently able to goe abroad. As yet we had no houses to cover us, our Tents were rotten and our Cabbins worse then nought: our best commoditie was Yron which we made into little chissels. The president and Captaine Martins sicknes, constrayned me to be Cape Marchant, and yet to spare no paines in making houses for the company; who notwithstanding our misery, little ceased their mallice, grudging, and muttering. As at this time were most of our chiefest men either sicke or discontented, the rest being in such dispaire, as they would rather starve and rot with idlenes, then be perswaded to do any thing for their owne reliefe without constraint: our victualles being now within eighteene dayes spent, and the Indians trade decreasing, I was sent to the mouth of the river, to Kegquouhtan an Indian Towne, to trade for Corne, and try the River for Fish, but our fishing we could not effect by reason of the stormy weather. The Indians thinking us neare famished, with carelesse kindnes, offred us little pieces of bread and small handfulls of beanes or wheat, for a hatchet or a piece of copper: In like maner I entertained their kindnes, and in like scorne offered them like commodities, but the Children, or any that shewed extraordinary kindnes, I liberally contented with free gifte, such trifles as wel contented them. Finding this colde comfort, I anchored before the Towne, and the next day returned to trade, but God (the absolute disposer of all heartes) altered their conceits, for now they were no lesse desirous of our commodities then we of their Corne: under colour to fetch fresh water, I sent a man to discover the Towne, their Corne, and force, to trie their intent, in that they desired me up to their houses: which well understanding, with foure shot I visited them. With fish, oysters, bread, and deere, they kindly traded with me and my men, beeing no lesse in doubt of my intent, then I of theirs; for well I might with twentie men have fraighted a Shippe with Corne. The Towne conteineth eighteene houses, pleasantly seated upon three acres of ground, uppon a plaine, halfe invironed with a great Bay of the great River, the other parte with a Baye of the other River falling into the great Baye, with a little Ile fit for a Castle in the mouth thereof, the Towne adjoyning to the maine by a necke of Land of sixtie yardes. With sixteene bushells of Corne I returned towards our Forte: by the way I encountered with two Canowes of Indians, who came aboard me, being the inhabitants of Waroskoyack, a kingdome on the south side of the river, which is in breadth 5 miles and 20 mile or neare from the

mouth: With these I traded, who having but their hunting provision, requested me to returne to their Towne, where I should load my boat with corne: and with near thirtie bushells I returned to the fort, the very name wherof gave great comfort to our desparing company.